

found any serious links between al-Qaida and Iraq. Those were the fundamental reasons we went to war with Iraq. I believe it was a mistake to attack Iraq at the time we did. I believe it was a priority that simply did not make sense given the threat to this country.

The imminent threat to this country is in the form of al-Qaida. The imminent threat to this country is the forces led by Osama bin Laden. It has now been 771 days since they attacked this country. Newsweek magazine reports they have a pretty good idea where Osama bin Laden is—right on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Yet there is no large-scale military operation underway to take out Osama bin Laden. I think the American people deserve to know why not. Why not? Why aren't we launching massive forces into the area identified as the place where Osama bin Laden is hiding? Have we been distracted by Iraq? I hope not. But the evidence I see is that the resources and the attention, which I believe should have been first directed at taking out Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida, are going to Iraq.

I very much hope we will have answers to these questions in the coming days.

The Senator in the Chair, whom I count as a friend in this body, is the chairman of the Intelligence Committee. Obviously he has knowledge none of the rest of us possess. As one Senator, I saw Osama bin Laden on these tapes again over the weekend and read the stories in the news magazines that said we have a pretty good idea where Osama bin Laden is. But we have not found him, leading to the suggestion that we have been distracted by Iraq. That disturbs me a great deal. I believe the overriding priority for this country and the national security of America is in holding Osama bin Laden to account, finding him, and stopping him.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the distinguished Senator has expired.

Mr. CONRAD. I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I have heard a lot of speeches on the Senate floor about Osama bin Laden, about Iran, Iraq, and the Middle East. As a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, I can only talk briefly about this matter, but I think it is important to note I was probably the first Member of Congress—at least to my knowledge and I believe anybody's knowledge—to mention the Clinton administration had better get on top of Osama bin Laden, or he is going to kill Americans. At one particular point in that period of time between that statement and when President Clinton left office, there was one time they could have captured Osama bin Laden, and he would have been turned over to them. They blew it, not realizing how important this matter was.

As a matter of fact, we now know he is behind terrorist activities all over the world, especially in our country and especially in the Middle East. We have had more than ample unclassified information, and person after person, group after group has tried to infiltrate our country to cause terrorist activities within this country, in each case tied back to Osama bin Laden.

We also know he has escaped Afghanistan and with the help of certain friends probably is residing somewhere in northeastern Pakistan but no one really knows. To make a long story short, we do not just have the right to go into northeastern Pakistan and conduct a major warfare search for Osama bin Laden without the permission of the Pakistanis. Everyone knows that. That relationship is a very important relationship.

We also know Osama bin Laden is not just dedicated against the United States of America but against anyone that stands for freedom. Particularly, he is against his own fellow Arabs in Saudi Arabia and other parts of the Middle East. It is apparent that many claims are made that some of the terrorism that happens in the Middle East is caused by al-Qaida, inspired by none other than Osama bin Laden. There is also no question that there have been ties to Saddam Hussein.

But be that as it may, anyone who tries to make out the case that we should not be in Iraq is ignoring decades of facts. Anyone who tries to pin the Iraqi matter strictly on whether or not Osama bin Laden had weapons of mass destruction is ignoring an awful lot of matters that indicate that if the United States did not act, it would be only a matter of time until it would be too late to act and there would be many thousands of others killed, networks set up, deterioration throughout the Middle East, which is, as a whole, strictly important to the United States of America, as well as other countries in the world.

I get a little tired of hearing people in the Senate criticizing President Bush for stopping these people for letting it be known throughout the world that we will not put up with acts of terrorism, that we will hit them where it hurts for doing what has been done in Iraq. Anyone with any brains has to realize there are so many facts there you do not even need weapons of mass destruction today to show what we have done there has placed a huge dent in terrorism around the globe and has rocked Osama bin Laden back on his heels. Yes, he is still capable of making an occasional television announcement. He is still capable of acting like he is more important than he is. But the fact is, we have put a big dent in his terrorist operations around the world.

That is not to say we should not stay vigilant, that we should not do everything in our power to make sure that terrorism is fought not just in our land but all around the world. One has to

look pretty far to look beyond the terrorist incidents of Saddam Hussein, his sons, and the Baathists in Iraq. All that is important in the Middle East as well as in other parts of the world. I will not take time to go through the fact that 10 years ago, the U.N. even verified he has the capacity to make weapons of mass destruction, was making weapons of mass destruction, used them against his own people, et cetera, et cetera.

It seems strange to me we have to go through this every day, with people lambasting the President, who literally has stood up the way he should stand up, ignoring the fact that many in the country of Iraq are thrilled we are there, bringing peace and stability, decency, honor, freedom, education, health care, infrastructure, and other matters to benefit that nation. Naturally, those who love terrorism, those who love hatred, are not going to like him. Instead of condemning the President for crass political reasons at that, we ought to be thanking him for having the guts to stand up and to take these actions that have long been overdue.

I have a lot more to say, but I let it go at that today. It is demoralizing to me to see a lack of support by some on the other side for what has been necessary for foreign affairs action. It used to be that offshore we supported whoever was President. I guess that was because most of the time the President was a Democrat. I guess it is different when there is a Republican President. All we have had are attempts to undermine everything President Bush is trying to do with probably the best foreign policy team I have seen in my 27 years in the Senate, composed of people who complement each other, who have cross-currents of belief, who basically come behind the President and support what is being done in ways that I don't think any other group of people could have done, certainly not as well as they have done.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

CLASS ACTION FAIRNESS ACT OF 2003—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 2:35 having arrived, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to the consideration of S. 1751, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to consideration of S. 1751, a bill to amend the procedures that apply to consideration of interstate class actions to assure fairer outcomes of class members and defendants, and for other purposes.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I note that Senator CORNYN is here. I ask unanimous consent he be permitted to